

BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

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ENFORCEMENT PRIORITY SYSTEM  
DISMISSAL REPORT

MUR: 7012

Complaint Receipt Date: February 19, 2016

Response Date(s): March 14, 2016

Respondents: Mike Sweeney 4 Congress, CELA  
and Kathy Sweeney, as treasurer  
(collectively the "Committee")<sup>1</sup>

EPS Rating:

Alleged Statutory

52 U.S.C. § 30120(a)(1), (c)(2)

Regulatory Violations:

11 C.F.R. § 110.11(a)(1) and (c)(2)(ii)

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The Complaint alleges that yard signs and brochures produced and distributed by the Mike Sweeney 4 Congress Committee ("Committee") failed to include the proper disclaimers in violation of 52 U.S.C. § 30120 and 11 C.F.R. § 110.11. According to the Complaint, the disclaimers on the Committee's yard signs, and at least one brochure, were not placed inside a printed box. The Committee responded by stating that it believed that the disclaimers were, in fact, placed in boxes, and were clearly visible. They add that Sweeney was a first-time, low-budget candidate, and that any potential violations of the Act or Commission regulations were unintentional mistakes.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Committee stated that all campaign signs had been removed after Sweeney's loss in the primary.

Whenever a political committee makes a disbursement for a communication through an outdoor advertising facility or mailing, the Act and Commission regulations require that the communication shall clearly state that it has been paid for by the committee. 52 U.S.C. § 30120(a)(1). *See also* 11 C.F.R. § 110.11(a)(1). Additionally, the disclaimer on any printed communication is required to be contained in a printed box set apart from the other contents of the

<sup>1</sup> Mike Sweeney was a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in the 31st Congressional District of Texas. Sweeney lost in the Republican primary on March 1, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Respondent also says that the complaint was politically motivated.

communication. 52 U.S.C. § 30120(c)(2). *See also* 11 C.F.R. § 110.11(c)(2)(ii). Photos of the brochure and yard signs attached to the Complaint indicate that the published materials contained the full text of a disclaimer, but that they may not have been contained in a printed box set apart from the other contents of the communication.

Based on its experience and expertise, the Commission has established an Enforcement Priority System using formal, pre-determined scoring criteria to allocate agency resources and assess whether particular matters warrant further administrative enforcement proceedings. These criteria include (1) the gravity of the alleged violation, taking into account both the type of activity and the amount in violation; (2) the apparent impact the alleged violation may have had on the electoral process; (3) the complexity of the legal issues raised in the matter; and (4) recent trends in potential violations and other developments in the law. This matter is rated as low priority for Commission action after application of these pre-established criteria. Given that low rating, and the fact that it is unlikely the general public would have been misled as to who was responsible for the communication, we recommend that the Commission dismiss the allegations consistent with the Commission's prosecutorial discretion to determine the proper ordering of its priorities and use of agency resources. *Heckler v. Chaney*, 470 U.S. 821, 831-32 (1985). We also recommend that the Commission close the file as to all respondents and send the appropriate letters.

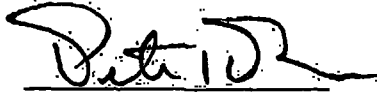
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11/14/16  
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